

Two Poets of the Peasantry

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church only to be distracted from the
 service by the
 enraging discovery that 'Eleyne' has
 bought 'a newe
 cote'; Wrath, as cook in a convent-kitchen,
 setting the
 nuns to slap each others' faces by spreading
 scandals—that
 dame Johanne was a bastard, and dame
 Peronelle had one
 'in cherry-time'; Avarice, who in the
 innocence of his
 heart mistakes 'restitution'⁵ to mean
 'stealing'⁹, knowing,
 as he pleads in excuse, 'no Frenche but of
 the ferthest
 ende of Norfolke'; or Sloth, the hunting
 parson, far
 better at finding a hare in a furrow than a
 meaning in his
 breviary. Such figures are less picturesque
 than Spenser's
 allegorical pageant; but they are far more
 individual; and
 their appearances are by no means
 neglected. Thus Wrath
 wakes:

with two whyte even
 And nyvelyng (snivelling) with the nose * and his
 nekke hangynge.⁵
 Sloth, on the other hand, comes ^{al}
 bislabered with two
 slymy eighen', and drops heavily into the
 nearest chair;
 while Avarice

Was biterbrowed (beetle-browed) • and baberlipped
 (thick-lipped)

also,

With two blered eyghen • as a blynde hagge;

And as a letheren purs • lolled his chekes

Wei sydder (lower) than his chyn * thei chiueld
 (shivered) for elde;

And, as a bondman, of his bacoun * his berde was
 bidraueled
 (bedraggled).

With an hode on his hed • a lousi hatte abotie,

And in a tauni tabard (coat) * of twelue wynter age,

Al totorne and baudy (dirty) • and ful of lys
 crepyng;

But if that (unless) a lous * couthe haue lopen (leapt)
 the bettre,

She sholde noughte have walked • on that welche
 (flannel) * so was
 it thredebare.

⁶Dr. Coulton, with characteristic thoroughness, has
 checked this
 description by Darwin's *Expression of the Emotions*,

x, 'Anger': 'The
dilated nostrils quiver. . . . According to Gratiolet, the
pupils are al-
ways contracted in rage... head inclined forwards...
this protrusion
of die head and body seems a common gesture with
the enraged.'